

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

September 20, 2019

The Honorable Adam Smith
Chairman
House Armed Services Committee
2216 Rayburn Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable James Inhofe
Chairman
Senate Armed Services Committee
228 Russell Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Mac Thornberry
Ranking Member
House Armed Services Committee
2216 Rayburn Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Jack Reed
Ranking Member
Senate Armed Services Committee
228 Russell Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Smith, Ranking Member Thornberry, Chairman Inhofe, and Ranking Member Reed:

As you work to finalize the conference process, we respectfully request consideration and retention of Section 602 of H.R. 2500, the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year 2020, in the final conference report.

Section 602 provides a basic needs allowance for low-income military service members. A 2016 Government Accountability Office report provides clear documentation that thousands of servicemember families experience food insecurity. Unique challenges and costs associated with military service—frequent moves, high rates of spousal unemployment, lack of nearby family support, and limited access to affordable child care—make it even more difficult to take care of a family. Recent Pentagon records show that during the 2018-19 school year, one third of military children at Department of Defense-run schools in the U.S. were eligible for free or reduced-price lunch.

Today, food pantries operate on or near every military base in the country. These pantries serve military families in need of charitable food assistance because they are ineligible for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits due to a technical barrier in the law. Specifically, under current law, a servicemember's Basic Allowance for Housing is counted as income for the purposes of determining SNAP benefits. As a result, low-income servicemembers with dependents, especially those living in counties with a high cost of living, often do not qualify for the program. The Military Family Basic Needs Allowance included in the House-passed FY20 NDAA would address this very problem.

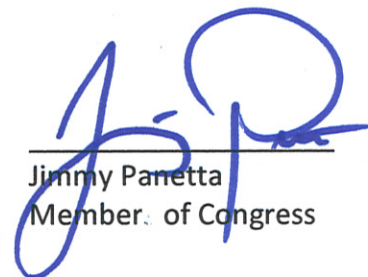
Military hunger and troop readiness go hand in hand. The Military Family Basic Needs Allowance would ensure that servicemembers are able to provide the basic needs for their family members, eliminate unnecessary stress and anxiety, and contribute to optimal mission readiness. Furthermore, additional support for military families' basic needs, including for household food purchases, will lead to better nutrition and improved health outcomes. Those who are willing to fight and die for our Nation shouldn't struggle to put food on the table for their families.

Thank you for your consideration of our request. We look forward to working with you throughout the conference process.

Sincerely,



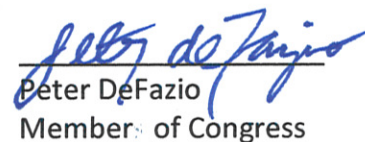
Don Young
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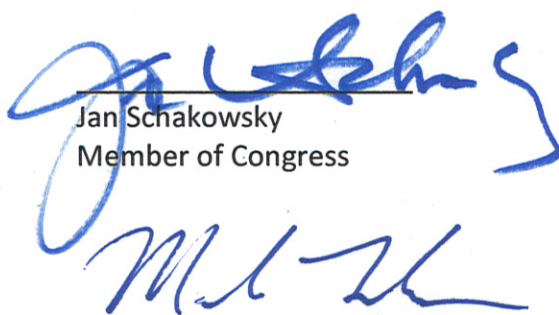
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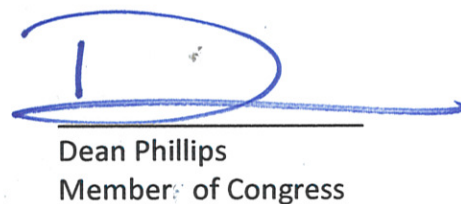
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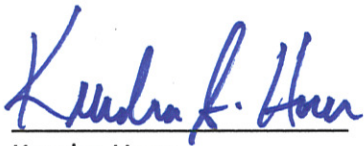
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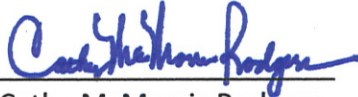
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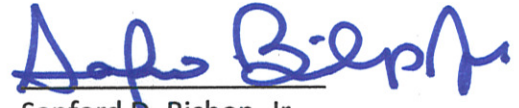
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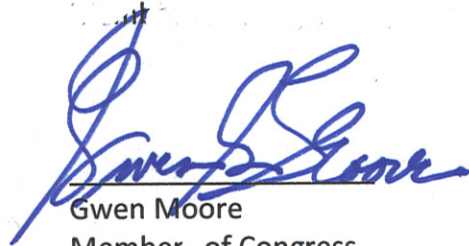
Sanford D. Bishop, Jr.
Member of Congress



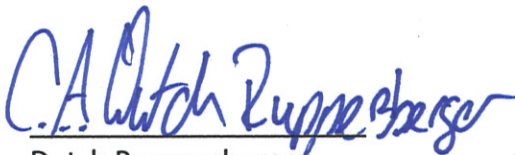
Ted Deutch
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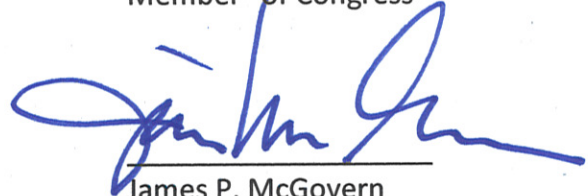
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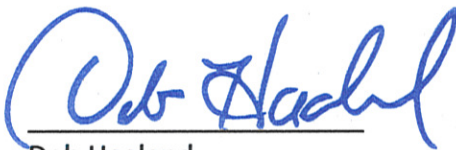
Andy Levin
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Barbra Lee
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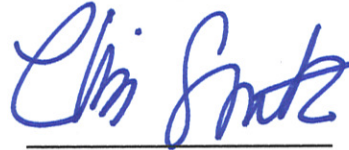
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Deb Haaland
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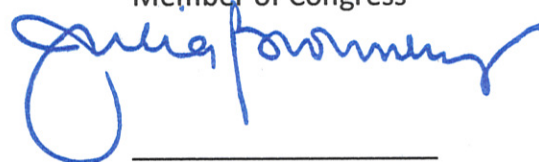
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Marcia Fudge
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Julia Brownley
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